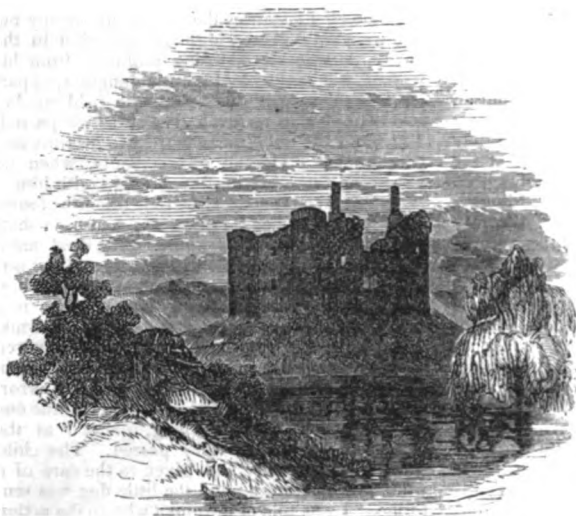




THE OLD CASTLE OF CARLOW.—(No. 10.)

(ORIGINAL.)

**BLACK NED.**

BY JAMES S. DAVIS.

ALMOST exactly in the centre of the kingdom of France, lies a little mountain town, called Montaign. It is in the extreme northwest corner of the department of Puy de Dome, and on the road from Montlucon, in that of Allier, to Clermont, the chief town of the former department; and is just at the point where the traveller, going southward, leaves the plains of the Bourbonnois for the rocks and mountains which diversify the surface of Auvergne.

In the course of one of my many peregrinations through France, I reached this place, one evening, about sunset, somewhat tired and very hungry. "*Le Cheval Blanc*," the "White Horse," was the better looking of two public houses which spread their signs to the breeze; and I found its accommodations as good as I could reasonably expect in such a place.

I shared the hospitalities of the *Cheval Blanc*, on that occasion, with a tall, dark-looking traveller, with an immense bluish-black beard, who had reached the place a little while before I did. This person I found to be decidedly taciturn and unsocial, and, after several unsuccessful attempts to enter into conversation with him, I finally gave him up, as one of the impracticables.

But though I had ceased to talk to the man, I did not find it an easy thing to quit thinking about him. I cannot say that I found him interesting; at all events, he certainly was not attractive; though there was something about the man which made me desirous to know something more about him.

From the few words (of French) I heard from my fellow-traveller's lips, I felt sure that he was

not a Frenchman, and I was inclined to think that English was his native tongue. Supposing this much to be ascertained, the next point was to find out whether he was English or American. It was of no sort of consequence to me, which he was; but my vagrant imagination would speculate on the subject in spite of me.

I spoke English to him, occasionally, and though he evidently understood me, he replied only in French. If I could have had ten or fifteen minutes' conversation with him, even in French, I could easily have settled the question of his nationality; but the conversation was like the handle of a jug—all on one side. He did nothing but nod his head, for yes, or shake it from side to side for no.

This extreme reserve had a very English look; but the man had not. He looked much more like a Yankee—an American—and I had a strong suspicion that he was an individual of that universal nation. But what could a Yankee be

doing in that out-of-the-way place? You may think that that question might be asked *apropos* of myself as well as of him. But the cases were not parallel. Anybody would know that I was a traveller, and bent only upon seeing the country; and if they didn't know, I was always ready and willing to tell them all about it. Anybody, on the contrary, would know that he was not a traveller, *per se*; and that is all they ever would know—from him.

While I was indulging in a train of exceedingly unprofitable speculation on these points, the object of them took himself off to bed; and I thought the most sensible thing I could do was to follow his example. And I'll bet I sleep more than he does, thought I. If I have any skill in reading the great book of human nature, that man's heart bears within it that "perilous stuff" which "murders sleep."

It was thus that this stranger's appearance and deportment operated upon me; and fatigued as I was, it was a long time before I could get him out of my head and go to sleep. And when I did sleep, it was not mending the matter much. I had thought queer thoughts of the man while I was awake, and I dreamed still queerer dreams of him after I had gone to sleep. I can recall little or nothing of the particulars now, but I do remember how he made his appearance, on one occasion, in the character of Bluebeard, and after killing half-a-dozen wives, turned into Tom Thumb, and sat astride of my nose, puffing tobacco-smoke into my nostrils, from my own meerschaum.

This dream was very suddenly dispelled. I thought that the stranger had resumed his original character of Bluebeard, and that he was dragging me away to share the fate of his murdered wives; and it was no small relief to me to discover that it was only the landlord, who was trying to shake me awake, with a strong grip on my shoulder. Mine host was as pale as if he

had to do with Bluebeard himself; and so he had.

"Monsieur! monsieur!" he shouted—"are you a doctor?"

For a man to come, in the middle of the night, and shake you roughly out of a sound sleep, in order to ask if you are a doctor, might not, improbably, in a choleric temperament, be provocative of pugilistic demonstrations, which might be consummated before there was any time for a satisfactory explanation. I am quite choleric enough, you will say, for any such catastrophe. But I had not the least idea of assuming a hostile attitude. On the contrary, I was most grateful to Monsieur Bruneau, for rescuing me from Bluebeard, even in imagination.

Besides, having had a few seconds for reflection, it did not require any great brilliancy of genius to suggest the probability that it was not mere curiosity to learn "what I did for a living," that had roused Monsieur Bruneau from his warm couch at two o'clock in the morning. I therefore simply replied in the affirmative, and waited quietly for further developments.

"Then," continued the landlord, "for heaven's sake, get on your clothes, as quick as possible, and come with me to the blue room. The tall gentleman, with the heavy black beard, has cut his own throat!"

"I knew he wasn't going to get any sleep," said I, as I bounced out of bed, and began to huddle on my clothes. "My prognosis anticipated sleep-murder, but did not go so far as self-murder. Cut his throat, has he? Well, I'll bet two to one he hasn't done it right. He has made a bungle of it—I know before I see it. There is not one man in a thousand that knows how to cut his throat properly. It is a small matter, perhaps, but then, you know, 'a thing that is worth doing at all is worth doing well.'"

The landlord stared. My soliloquy was in English; but it may be doubted whether he would have been less mistified or more edified if it had been in his own tongue. However, I had by this time finished my hasty toilet, as well as my observations upon the art of throat-cutting, and I motioned to mine host to lead the way to the blue room. When I reached that sky-colored chamber, I found the very identical condition of things that I had anticipated. The throat was cut, true enough, and almost from ear to ear; but it was not effectually and properly cut, for all that. I have seen

a good many cases of throat-cutting in my time, and among them all I have never seen the thing done properly but in one single instance. In that case, there was a small, clean, neat incision, not three inches long, and less than one inch in depth; and yet the job was done thoroughly and effectually. The man died immediately.

It was done with a scalpel, and the man who did it was an anatomist. And nobody but an anatomist knows how to do it. The operator generally takes a knife or razor, and saws away directly in front of his windpipe, till he has made a great hideous gash, several inches deep—and he calls that cutting his throat.

Supposing that he has done the work effectually, he throws away his instrument, and lays himself down, expecting to die comfortably in a few minutes. But, to his great surprise, death don't come for days, perhaps weeks, perhaps never. He has done nothing to make him come. He has touched no vital part, and the great ugly wound is not necessarily mortal.

But one who really knows how to do it, instead of sawing at his windpipe, makes a small, neat incision, in the side of his neck, divides the *carotid* artery, *secundum artem*, and bleeds to death quietly and scientifically, in a few minutes. And then, every ignoramus sings out that he has "cut his *jugular*," and therefore must die; when the truth is, it doesn't matter a button whether he has cut his *jugular* or not; he has cut his *carotid*, and that is all that's wanting. That finishes him.

But what a fool I am to be talking surgery in this ridiculous fashion. The fact is, I am always at it, whenever I get a chance. I can't "sink the shop," that is the truth. I never could.

But about this stranger. He had cut his throat, and as I had anticipated, in the usual unscientific manner. It was absolutely butcher-like. His throat was horribly mangled, but still he was



CHURCH OF ST. MULTOSE, KINSALE.—(No. 11.)



IRISH PEASANTS WASHING.—(No. 12.)

not killed, and might continue to live some days. When the landlord and his attendants attempted to bind it up, he tore it open in such a savage manner as to render his case still more hopeless. It was when this occurred that the landlord came to wake me.

By the time I reached his bedside, he had become too weak to do himself any farther injury, and had indeed fainted from loss of blood. While he was in this condition, I dressed the wound carefully, and bandaged it as securely as possible. Four days and nights I watched by his bedside. On the fifth day he died. I have witnessed many fearful death-scenes, but none so horrible as this. He was sane the greater part of the time, and not actually insane I think, when he committed the fatal deed.

I will attempt no description of this appalling death-bed. You may have some idea of what it was, after you have heard a brief sketch of the principal events of his life. He had written a sort of autobiography, which I found among his effects after his death. The paper has been lost, but I have retained the most of it in my memory, and I will transmit it to you, as nearly as I can, in his own words.

For ten years or more, the name of "*Black Ned*" was a terror to the dwellers on the frontiers of Texas. I am that "*Black Ned*." My entire name is Edward Burns. I was born in a quiet village, in the Great Valley of Virginia, between the Blue Ridge and the Alleghany Mountains. That part of Virginia is mostly peopled by de-

scendants of Scotch-Irish Presbyterians and Germans, chiefly from Pennsylvania. The majority of them are somewhat rough, but a simple-hearted, honest race, producing very few characters like myself. My father was a farmer on a small scale—a poor and a hard-working man. He had no family, however, but my mother and myself, and might have gotten along very well, if it had not been for one serious defect in his education—he had never learned the art of saying no. His good nature was continually getting him into pecuniary difficulties, and prevented him from making any progress towards the attainment of a competence. I don't know that I was by nature more depraved than other boys, but my parents were so indulgent with their only child that he generally did as he pleased, and generally pleased to do wrong rather than right. My mother was especially lenient to my faults. I was considered "quick at learning," but I played truant almost as often as I thought proper, and only learned what pleased me. I must have had pretty good natural abilities, for even in that way, I managed to pick up shreds and patches of education sufficient to give me, in after years, a certain degree of superiority over those with whom I

associated in my turbulent career. The first marked step in the downward path, which I can now call to my recollection, occurred in this way. One fine August morning, when I was perhaps ten or eleven years old, I started alone to go to church. My father was sick, and my mother could not leave him.

"Hillo! Where are you going?"

It was in this manner that I was accosted by Richard Savin, a boy of fourteen or fifteen years of age, who had only been living a few months in the village.

"I am going to meetin'," I replied.

"To meetin', hey? What a jolly big fool you must be, to go and shut yourself up where Parson Long can holler at you for an hour at a lick, and old Squire Saunders snorin' so loud you can't even sleep."

"Don't you never go to meetin', Dick?"

"Me! Not any, I thank you—much obliged to you. I used to go though, when I lived over the Ridge. Five or six of us boys had a meetin' every Sunday, and we used to sing a hymn they call 'High, low, jack and the game.'"

"Do you mean you played cards?"

"Played cards? Me play cards? Me—shockin'; I used to read pasteboard picter-books sometimes—but play cards—never. It's agin my principles."

"What are you going to do to-day?"

"Well, if you must know, Squire Saunders has give me an invite to a cold collation—a sort of picnic—all alone, by myself, in the corner of

the woods, down by the big spring. Will you go along? I've got leave to bring a friend."

I had no intention of going with Dick at first, but I went on talking with him, and walking the same way he did, until I was half a mile or more away from the church, before I thought about it.

"There," says Dick, "there's the last bell ringin'. You can't get there in time now. You'd better come to the collation."

"I can't indeed, Dick. Father and mother would be as mad as the mischief."

"How are they going to know anything about it? You needn't tell 'em where you was. They'll think you was at church."

By arguments like this, Dick at last succeeded in inducing me to go with him. I hadn't the least idea of what he meant by his "collation," till we arrived at Squire Saunders's watermelon-patch, where my companion began to help himself very freely, earnestly recommending me to pursue the same course.

"Why, Ned," said he, "I'm surprised at you. The squire will certainly be offended, if you slight his collation in this way. Gather up as many as you can find, of the very largest and best, and put 'em into this bag, and carry 'em into the woods."

"But that's stealin', Dick."

"Blatherskite! Who ever heerd of sich a thing as stealin' watermilons? We'll take a bagful, and old Saunders will never know the difference—you may just bet your head on that. Come—here goes!"

I yielded to Dick's arguments, most powerfully backed by my own appetite. We carried off almost a cart-load of melons and hid them in the bushes. We then took our places at the "collation," and ate till we could eat no more. When we came to a halt, Dick took a small package from his pocket, and slowly removed a paper in which it was enveloped, while I watched him very attentively.

"Gracious goodness, Dick!" said I, at last, "what queer-looking pictures! Where did you get them? What are they for?"

"Picters! Ha, ha, ha, ha! Well, dog my grandmammy's shoes to Guinea, if you aint jest about the greenest young un that ever sprouted!"

"They're cards, aint they, Dick?"

"Rather think they are, old hoss—bran new ones, too, jest outer the store. Shove your limestone sofy up to this ere log, and I'll show you how to use them."

I moved up the rock I was sitting on, and was then and there initiated into the mysteries of "old sledge," "all fours," "seven up," or whatever else its proper appellation may be. The game fascinated me, and before I rose from my "limestone sofy" the sun was low in the west and I had lost my share of the stolen watermelons. I went home, told an ingeniously concocted fib to the old folks, and thus ended my first day of open, flagrant, unmitigated wickedness. From that time forward, Dick became my preceptor in every kind of petty iniquity, from cheating at marbles to robbing hen-roosts, and an apt scholar he found me.

My poor father never recovered. His premature death saved him many a heart-ache. It saddened me for a little while, but I soon learned to rejoice in the additional freedom which my fond mother's lax government afforded me.

One dark, rainy evening, I heard Dick's signal-whistle about dusk. I went out to meet him, and he asked me to walk awhile with him.

"A nice night for a walk, upon my word," said I, as we went out of the gate towards the fields.

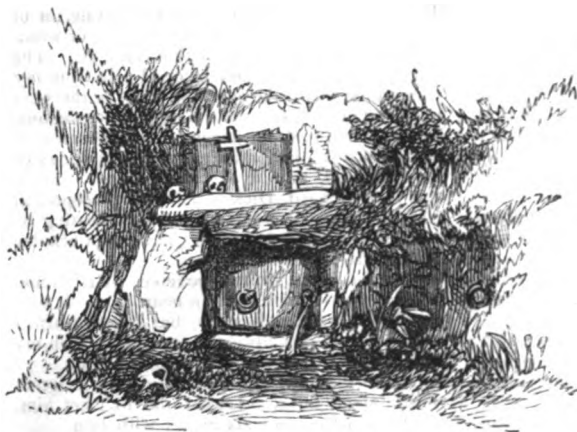
"It is a nice night," said Dick; "just the kind of a night I've been praying for—a first-rate night."

"Well, you may like it, but for my part, I'd rather have a dry skin than a wet one. Come in under the shed here, and I'll talk to you as much as you please."

"Ned," said my companion, as soon as we were within the shed, "you were wishing for something this morning, and saying you would do anything to get it."



KEENER, OR PAID MOURNER.—(No. 13.)



TOMB IN THE ABBEY OF MUCROSS.—(No. 14.)

"I was wishing for money this morning."

"Just so. And if you are not too much afraid of a wet skin, I can tell you how to get some, this very night."

Dick neither said nor thought anything about being afraid of a wicked deed. That was a fear that troubled him even less than it did me. His father was a rogue before him, and he had been case-hardened from his very mother's milk.

"I know a man," continued Dick, "not three miles off, who will pay us a fair price for every sheep, or hog, or calf, we bring him, and furnish a light wagon to haul 'em with, too. I reckon we could manage to pick up a few fat wethers such a night as this—couldn't we?"

The proposition startled me a little at first. I had never stolen anything but fruit and the like, thus far. But Dick soon found arguments to quiet my scruples. We started off at once, and before morning, Colonel Fowler, the "big bug" of our neighborhood, had lost some of his finest sheep, and we had, each one of us, twenty-five dollars in his pocket.

This was the entering-wedge to numerous acts of depredation of a similar character, which we managed to carry on without detection, though not altogether without suspicion in some instances. In the meantime, my mother married again. After that, I was less looked after than ever. Indeed, I was now entirely beyond the control either of my mother or my stepfather, and they had almost ceased making efforts to restrain me in any way.

I loved my mother. She was as kind and gentle, as I was savage and disagreeable. But home was far from being attractive to me. The most pleasant thing there, was a little sister Katie, who was born when I was about seventeen years old. She was a beautiful child, and she loved me with all her little heart.

Dick was a shrewd scoundrel, and his age gave him some advantages over me in those days. We had been adroit enough to lay our theft at the door of the free negroes, and few suspected us. Emboldened by this continued impunity, we now began to look for higher game. Old Mr. Fant, the watch-maker and jeweller, had just

returned from Baltimore with an unusually valuable stock of watches, jewelry, etc. He slept at some distance from his store, though in the same building. We had obtained possession of a key which fitted the lock exactly. These temptations were more than we could withstand. One dark night we entered the store, lit a candle and fell to work, swiftly but noiselessly, to fill a small bag with glittering spoil. I was already far gone in wickedness, but I actually shuddered as I noted the expression of Dick's greedy, cruel eyes, as they gloated over the heavy patent lever watches, and the handfuls of rich jewelry, as they disappeared within the bag—it was fearful to behold.

"Come, Dick, let's be off," whispered I, as I put in the last of the watches.

"No, no," he replied, "there's plenty more things back there. I'm for making a clean sweep as we go."

The words were hardly out of his mouth, when the back door opened, and in walked the owner of the articles we were making so free with. His entrance was so noiseless, that we were standing face to face before we had the least idea that any one was stirring. I dropped the bag, and started to run. I had known the old gentleman since my childhood, and had always had the greatest respect for him. But before I had fairly turned round, I saw a bright bowie-knife flashing in the air above his head, and then his blood spouted out upon the counter, and upon the body of his murderer!

"Great God!" cried I, "what have you done?"

"I've done what had to be done—what could not be helped," replied Dick. "Dead men tell no tales—and he would have had a pretty tale to tell on us, if we'd a' been fools enough to let him live."

The old man was already dead. As I saw his long, gray hair stained with the blood which was still trickling from the wound, I grew dizzy and sick at the sight. I staggered to the door, and urged Dick to follow me; but he would not come till he had everything he wanted. This bloody deed made a great sensation of course in that quiet community; but its very atrocity served to shield us from suspicion. It was generally attributed to two strangers from Richmond, who had been lounging about the village the day before. I had some very severe twinges of remorse for a few days, but when I thought of our three or four thousand dollars' worth of plunder, I soon suffered the idea to console and harden me, though I always envied Dick the perfect coolness with which he treated so foul and terrible a murder. But what were we to do with our booty? We could make no use of it where we were, and it was soon decided that we should carry it to Baltimore. This pleased me exceedingly, for a visit to one of the great Atlantic cities had always been one of my favorite "castles in the air," often dreamed about, but with no hope of the dreams ever coming true.

The evening before I left, when I went home, having been absent all day, as usual, my little sister Katie rose up from her crib, in the corner, held out her white, round, chubby little arms, put up her rosbud of a mouth for a kiss, and cried out:

"Buddy tum home to Tat!e!" As I pressed my lips to those of the innocent child, I left a tear upon her cheek. *It was the last I ever shed!*

Next day I went to Baltimore with Dick, where we commenced a life of the most riotous dissipation. There are few places in America, where the means and appliances for such a course of life and companions therein, are more abundant or more easy of access. Such means and such companions were soon found, and they soon completed our education, and qualified us for the most advanced degrees of wickedness.

Dick was excessively fond of gambling, and indulged in it to the utmost, so that his new friends very soon cleared him out, to the last penny. Thereupon he borrowed ten dollars of me and returned to his village home. For my part, I was too well pleased with my taste of city habits to relinquish them while I had any of the material for a jolly life left. About a fortnight after Dick's departure, I received a letter from him, of which the following is a copy, *verbatim et literatim*:

"DEAR NED:—I set down to rite you a few lines, which I hope you will burn them, and not let noboddy read them but yourself, as soon as you git them. The reasin you will see when you come to read them. Fur I want to tell you how that Curnel Fowler and all his famaly except his bosses and niggers and sich like, which is sont down to the Big Spring Farm, is gone to Philadelphia to see some big doctor thar about Mrs. Fowler's *new rology* in the face. And thars all the teaspoons and teapots, and a waggen-lode of silver things, besides Mrs. Fowler's dimons and nicknacks and gimcracks, wuth thousands and thousands of dollars, and not a sole left in the house but only the overseer, half a mile off. Now you jis come home quick as the devil'il let you, and weel dig a big hole in the groun' and bury all them things, and when the hallabaloo's all over, weel slip 'em off to Baltimore, that is, arter we've tuck 'em outen the house, which we kin do jist as easy as kiss your hand, and come rite off, and yours-an-so-forth RICHARD SAVIN."

My funds were getting low, and I therefore needed no urging to cause me to return at once. When I reached the village, I found that Dick had made everything ready for the burglary. I had arrived after dark, and was anxious to get away again without being seen by any one. I therefore persuaded Dick to go on with the job that night. Favored by a broken pane, we managed to get into a window, and thus into the house, very quietly. We advanced cautiously along the passage, looking into all the rooms as we went.

"Furies!" ejaculated Dick, in a very energetic whisper, "there is somebody sleeping here after all!"

"Are you sure?"

"Can't you hear his breathing?"

I did hear it, sure enough.

"Tread easy now," said Dick, "and we'll see if there's anybody else here."

We soon satisfied ourselves that all the other rooms were empty.

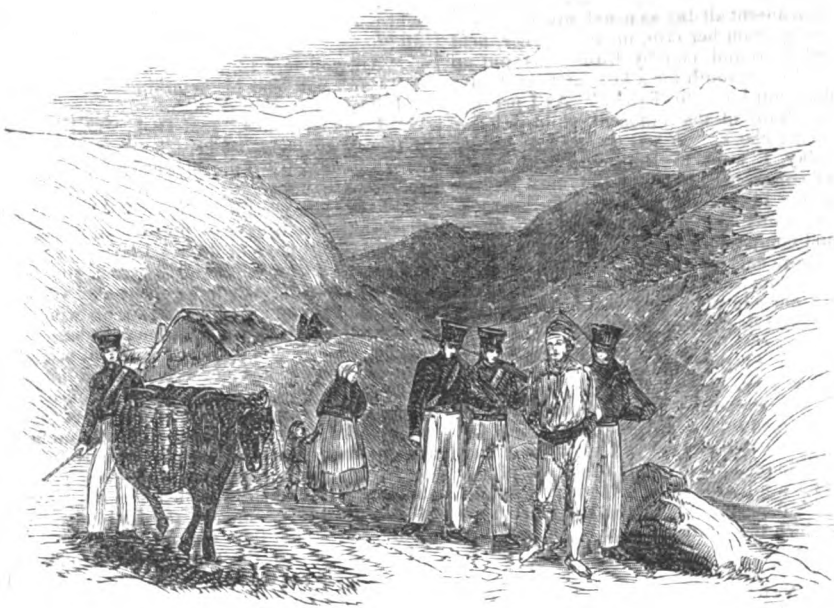
"I tell you what it is, Ned, if that fellow in thar wakes, we'll have to finish him, and you're the one that'll have to do it. I know the house, and know whar the things is, and you don't. While I go and get them together, you will have to watch here, and if he wakes, slit his windpipe. There's no other way to keep him from hollerin'."

This arrangement was not at all to my taste. Bad as I was, I had never committed murder, and I was loth to do it now. He had once lived in the house, and knew all about it. I could not refuse to take the part assigned me without backing out altogether, and that I was unwilling to do. I reluctantly consented to take my place at the door of the room in which the sleeper was, leaving a candle burning in the hall outside, so as to throw a faint light into the room.

I could not see the face of the person in the bed. I could see nothing indeed but a confused heap of bed-clothes. All was silent, except Dick's step above stairs, the ticking of a clock which had been set going in the passage, and the deep breathing of the sleeper. I sometimes fancied I could hear the breathing of a second sleeper, so light as to be scarcely audible, and only occasionally so. The silence was becoming exceedingly oppressive, and I began to think that Dick was an age in getting through with the job. He was now directly over my head, and seemed to be moving some heavy body. Suddenly there was a loud crash—it had apparently fallen to the floor. I cursed the fellow's clumsiness, and glanced uneasily at the sleeper, who muttered something, turned over, and then rose on one elbow, as if to listen. I sprang to the



YOUNG IRISH GIRL AND THE WITCH.—(No. 15.)



POLICE OFFICERS ARRESTING A PEASANT.—(No. 16.)

bedside, and buried my knife twice in the heart of the indistinctly seen figure. The warm blood spouted over me, and a fearful pang shot into the very depths of my soul, as I said to myself, "I am a murderer!" At that instant Dick reached the door, with a candle in his hand, and the light shone full upon all objects in the room. I saw a sweet little face emerge from the bedclothes near the wall, two little white arms were stretched towards me, and a well-known childish voice exclaimed:

"Buddy tum home to Tatie!"

The arms of the unconscious child were dabbled in blood, as she stretched them forth to welcome her mother's murderer!

Yes, I had slain my own fond, indulgent mother. She and her husband had been invited to stay in the house till the proprietor's return from the North. They would have both been there that night, but my stepfather was accidentally called away to sit up with a sick man. With a mark upon my forehead as terrible as that of Cain, I fled to Texas, and there became "*Black Ned*," the savage outlaw, and leader of desperadoes, fearing neither God, nor man, nor devil.

But the doom of the parricide was ever on me, and the life of the "*Wandering Jew*" was a peaceful and happy one, compared to that hell upon earth which has so many years been my portion. A whirl of excitement and never-ending turmoil, of rapine, robbery, crime, cruelty, murder, madness, danger and death, was as the vital air, without which I could not live a single day. But a few hours of rest and reflection would conjure up spectres which drove me many times to the very verge of madness. Years of this wretched existence rolled over my head. I

have already said that I had ceased to weep, and I may well add that I had ceased to smile. A wild, reckless, joyless, scornful laugh, such as devils might indulge in, was my only attempt at mirthfulness.

One summer evening, with robbery and perhaps murder in my heart, I entered the cottage of an English settler, near the Neuces. A lovely little girl stood by the door, and as I opened it, clapped her hands and cried out—"Buddy tum home!"

With a howl of anguish, I turned away, sprang upon my horse, and rode off at a furious speed, as if I might thus escape the vulture of remorse which was gnawing at my heart.

I could rob no more. I tried war, and fought like a madman. I tried rum, and guzzled like a brute. I roamed through all countries, and tried all means of excitement, all modes of self-forgetfulness. But never did I find one cool drop of comfort with which to moisten the parched lips of my despair. But the wretched farce of life is almost over now. Madness and death are about to drop the curtain. Already I feel the fire of insanity tingling in my veins. Already I see the devils rising from the bottomless pit, and beckoning me with bloody claws and grinning lips, while deep down among the curling flames, and the writhing myriads of the damned, I see the arch fiend himself, stretching forth his steel-tipped talons towards me, and screaming in tones of horrid mockery and hellish discord, "*Buddy tum home to Tatie!*"

To live with a true economy is to live wisely. The man who lives otherwise has no prudent regard for his own happiness. But there is no worse folly than false economy.